

CHAPTER 5

OTHER ACTIVITIES AND RELATED IMPACTS

GROWTH INDUCEMENT

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires consideration of potential growth-inducing impacts as indirect effects of proposed actions (40 CFR 1508.8(b)). To find that there would be a growth-inducing impact as a result of the proposed long-term water service contract renewal action, a determination would need to be made that the proposed action would result in increased growth and that the increased growth would be reasonably certain to occur. The proposed long-term water service contract renewal between Reclamation and CCWD would not result in growth-inducing impacts, for the reasons described below.

Growth Inducement Analysis Completed for Related Projects

Environmental documentation completed for two related projects undertaken by the CCWD, the MPP and the FWSI, analyzed potential growth inducement associated with implementation of these projects. The MPP EIR/EIS studied modifications to the Contra Costa Canal to provide structural upgrading and a water backup supply system, and the FWSI EIR evaluated future water demand and considered increasing the water supply over the current allotment of 195,000 acre-feet per year to 219,400 acre-feet per year. An increased water supply could be accommodated under both of these projects. The environmental documents concluded that while provision of additional water would remove an obstacle to growth, it would not alter the time, magnitude, or location of growth forecasted by the regional planning and land use agencies in Contra Costa County.

The MPP EIR/EIS concluded that the MPP would indirectly support growth in the cities and the County but also concluded that this growth would not exceed planned levels or occur in areas not planned for development by the lead land use agencies. The impacts of this growth have also been evaluated in the environmental documentation of the cities and the County.

The FWSI was developed to respond to growth projected by the County and cities' general plans. The FWSI specifically responded to policies outlined in the County General Plan EIR, including the development of supplies and facilities to meet future water needs (Policy 7-17 of the County General Plan). The FWSI EIR also concluded that the projects included in the FWSI would not directly cause growth, but would accommodate growth already anticipated in the County and cities' general plans.

In contrast to the MPP and FWSI projects, the proposed action would not either directly or indirectly increase the amount of CVP water historically provided to the CCWD. The continued provision of water would, however, accommodate the need for water generated by current development and projected countywide growth forecasts. Development is planned and managed through the County and cities' general plans and land management processes. Reclamation and CCWD have no jurisdiction over local land use policy or decision-making related to land development proposals.

Water System Capacity

A project would be growth inducing if it resulted in increased water system capacity. Since the proposed contract renewal would not increase water system capacity, it would not be growth inducing. The capacity of CCWD's water system was increased by the MPP, resulting in indirect impacts on growth in the County.

Growth Inducement Analysis of the Proposed Action

The purpose and need for a proposed action are key considerations in evaluating its potential to induce future growth. As identified previously in this EA, the purpose of the proposed action is to replace CCWD's Amendatory Contract. Long-term contract renewal is needed to continue the provision of CVP water, incorporate administrative conditions into the renewed contract in compliance with federal reclamation law, and allow the continued reimbursement to the federal government for costs related to CVP operation. These actions would neither increase the amount of water provided to the CCWD nor introduce new structures or facilities that could accommodate increased water volumes.

The proposed action would renew the long-term water service contract to deliver water from the CVP to the CCWD. All alternatives would secure continued CVP water delivery to the CCWD service area at the current level of up to 195,000 acre-feet per year. The differences among the alternatives are contractual features, including water cost, definition of M&I users, and water measurement. None of the alternatives would change the water service amount, increase water system capacity, or introduce new facilities. The provision of a reliable water supply to CCWD would not directly cause growth to occur, but would rather accommodate existing water demands and future growth envisioned in the cities' and County general plans and amendments. Regional growth issues have been adequately addressed in the County General Plan, the general plan for each city within the project service area, and regional plans generated by the Association of Bay Area Governments, the California Department of Transportation, and others. These planning efforts used historical analysis, the formulation of public goals and policies, and various types of forecasting to generate growth management plans addressing the nature, pace, scale, and geographical distribution of future changes in population, economy, and land use with the service area. Each plan was developed with substantial community and public agency input, and each was subject to comprehensive environmental review prior to approval and adoption.

Local and regional plans incorporate consideration of the regional water system as one basis of land use planning. The discretionary approval of land development projects within each local jurisdiction is predicated on conformance with these land use regulations. Thus, limitations to new land development that exist due to capacities in the regional water system are imposed through the land development approval process. Since the proposed action would not alter the regional water delivery and storage system, it would not affect any existing or anticipated limitations to population growth.

UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

No unavoidable direct adverse impacts resulting from long-term water service contract renewal have been identified. None of the alternatives would change the water service amount, increase water system capacity, or introduce new facilities. They would therefore not directly cause any physical changes to the environment. Implementation of the alternatives would accommodate planned development and growth in accordance with city and County land use plans.

Contra Costa County has identified some significant unavoidable impacts of planned growth, including loss of farmland, air quality degradation, traffic congestion, and a change in aesthetic character. These issues were adequately evaluated in previous environmental documents, and the County adopted a statement of overriding considerations for these impacts.